

**Minutes**  
**Wildlife Resources Committee**  
**2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, S. E.**  
**Suite 1252 East Tower**  
**Atlanta, GA 30334**

**Tuesday, March 28, 2023**  
**9:00 a.m.**

**Committee Members**

Patrick Denney, Chair  
Kevin Jackson, Vice Chair  
Charles DePriest  
Randy Dellinger  
Joe Hatfield  
Duncan Johnson  
Ray Lambert  
Bodine Sinyard  
Miki Thomaston  
Gary Vowell  
Dee Yancey  
Dwight Davis, Board Chair, Ex-officio

**Board Members**

Nancy Addison  
Nick Ayers  
Dan Garcia  
Penn Hodge  
Tim Lowe  
Paul Shailendra

**Guests**

Jud Turner, Counsel to Elberton Granite Association  
Brant Lane, Hodges, Harbin, Newberry and Tribble  
Bryan Tolar, Georgia Urban Ag Council  
Dominic LaRiccia, Department of Agriculture  
Mike Worley, Georgia Wildlife Federation  
Mark Woodall, Sierra Club

**Staff Members**

Mark Williams, Commissioner  
Walter Rabon  
Kyle Pearson  
Kate Iannuzzi  
Cathy Barnette  
Artica Gaston  
Donald Kirkland  
Thomas Barnard  
Jeff Cown  
Doug Haymans  
Scott Robinson  
Tina Johannsen  
Angie Johnson  
Charlie Killmaster

Richard Dunn, Director  
Erin Ruoff  
Karen Hays  
Jim Boylan  
Chuck Mueller  
Anna Truszczynski  
Laura Williams

The March 28, 2023 meeting of the Wildlife Resources Committee was called to order by Chairman Dwight Davis.

Chairman Davis called on Patrick Denney, Chairman of the Wildlife Resources Committee. Mr. Denney called on Dr. Tina Johannsen, Assistant Chief, to present a briefing on Proposed Amendments to Hunting Regulations, Chapter 391-4-2 and Sale of Alligator Meat and Products, 391-4-13.

Dr. Johannsen stated the hunting regulations are updated on a biennial basis. She further stated that in January the process started with a public input time period and a series of meetings were scheduled across the state to get input from hunters. She added that she is providing this briefing to highlight the updates.

Dr. Johannsen stated there are four filters when updating regulations: 1) Is this going to harm the resource; 2) What do hunters, anglers, trappers, and the citizens of Georgia want to see them do with a particular hunting regulation; 3) Keep it simple and flexible; and 4) Minimize any challenges for the recruitment, retention, and reactivation of the hunters.

Dr. Johannsen stated there were 105 attendees at the public/in-person meetings across the state and 128 participants at the one virtual meeting. She further stated that 83 suggestions were received by the public who attended in-person and 396 emails were received with various suggestions.

Dr. Johannsen stated that traditionally hunters who need assistance in the fields have been allowed to bring an assistant who is not carrying a bow or firearm to assist with stands or removing deer, and this is now codified. She further stated that alligator hunters have always been able to sell their lawfully harvested raw hides, but there was a contradiction in the regulations that is being clarified. She added that they hope to see an increased market of wild caught alligator hides.

Dr. Johannsen stated the proposed amendments are adding 100 harvest permits for alligator hunting this year. She further stated the permits would be distributed equitably across zones except 1A and the Fort Stewart zone. She added it is a modest increase, but they feel it will not have an impact on the alligator population.

Dr. Johannsen stated the proposed amendments are adding Richmond to the urban counties who have extended archery season. She further stated the proposal is to add additional Either-Sex opportunities for deer hunting in certain areas.

Dr. Johannsen stated in southwest Georgia the rut season was later than around the state. She further stated they have been collecting data for a couple of years and the changes that are proposed are a direct result of that information. She added the first two weeks of archery season will be buck-only, firearm season will be extended to January 15, and archery season will be extended to January 31.

Dr. Johannsen stated that changes to bear season include game check requirements being extended for all three zones, and hunters will still be required to bring in the head and hide for sampling, so the division can collect critical biological data. She further stated that the division is actively soliciting taxidermists and meat processors to collect those samples, which is the whole point of bringing in the bear. She added that the regulations will now stipulate when you must have your bear checked. She further stated the proposal will allow hunters to sign-in online for bear-dog training in the Chattahoochee National Forest.

Dr. Johannsen stated that most of the changes to public lands are minor but are clarifying that centerfire rifles may not be used for small game on WMAs and for hunting coyotes at night. She further stated that language was deleted that prohibited the use of electronic calls, anticipating that the legislature is going to remove that prohibition on hunting foxes and bobcats with electronic calls.

Dr. Johannsen stated that a modification was made to standard language pertaining to state park hunts, which required hunters to attend a 7:00 a.m. pre-hunt meeting, to make it more flexible by getting the information to hunters without requiring the 7:00 a.m. pre-hunt meeting.

Dr. Johannsen stated that a few other WMA amendments include changing hunts on 46 WMAs, mostly calendar shifts to avoid holidays. She further stated that most of the changes are to increase opportunities for hunters with deer archery and bear archery opportunities, so they have expanded those hunts on several WMAs. She added that one decrease is allowing rabbit hunting only 3 days a week on Di-Lane WMA. She further added that Di-Lane is a quail focal area and research shows adverse response of quail to rabbit hunting pressure, and decreasing rabbit hunting to 3 days a week provides hunting opportunity and reduces adverse impacts on quail populations.

Dr. Johannsen stated that concluded her briefing and she would be happy to answer any questions.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.